U.S. House Committee on Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on "PPACA Pulse Check: Part 2"
Testimony of Michael Finkel
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Chairman Pitts, Ranking Member Pallone, and Members of the Subcommittee, good morning. My name is Michael Finkel, and I am the Executive Vice President for Program Delivery of Quality Software Services, Inc., or QSSI. My role at QSSI is to oversee our project managers and staff, and ensure successful and efficient project delivery and implementations, with a particular focus on government IT projects. I have worked in IT for 17 years, concentrating on health care IT for the last nine years, and have successfully managed the delivery of numerous government programs during that time. I am pleased to be here this morning to introduce you to QSSI and discuss our work with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on the federal Data Services Hub.

QSSI

QSSI was founded in Maryland in 1997, and we are a leading systems integrator. We work with customers in the public and private sectors to design and build custom IT systems, including security and privacy solutions, cloud-based applications, and data management systems.

QSSI has worked with Federal government agencies for nearly 15 years and with CMS since 2006. Currently, QSSI is one of several contractors working at the direction of CMS to develop systems that will support health insurance marketplaces, commonly referred to as Exchanges. While we do various work with CMS in this area, my testimony today focuses on QSSI's role in developing the Data Services Hub on behalf of CMS. Our job is to write the software code, based on CMS-approved specifications for the Data Services Hub. We expect the Data Services Hub will be ready for CMS to operate as planned on October 1st.

The Data Services Hub: What It Is, How It Works

Simply put, the Data Services Hub will transfer data. It will facilitate the process of verifying applicant information data, which is used by health insurance marketplaces to determine eligibility for qualified health plans and insurance programs, as well as for Medicaid and CHIP. The Hub's function will be to route queries and responses between a given marketplace and various data sources. The Data Services Hub itself will not determine consumer eligibility, nor will it determine which health plans are available in the marketplaces.

Here's more detail on how the Data Services Hub will work:

A consumer interested in purchasing health insurance online will go to a health insurance marketplace's web portal to fill out enrollment forms and select a plan. Certain information the consumer provides to the marketplace, such as citizenship, will have to be verified. The marketplace will direct a query to external information sources, such as government databases. Those queries will be funneled through the Data Services Hub.

Once the requested information is sent back, eligible consumers are then able to enroll in one of the available plans. The enrollment data, such as name, address, and premium amount, will then be transferred through the Data Services Hub from the originating marketplace to the health plan chosen by the consumer.

It's important to keep two characteristics of the Hub in mind. One, while the Data Services Hub will pass eligibility data from verification sources to the federal and state marketplaces and enrollment data from marketplaces to plan issuers, it will not handle personal medical records.

Second, CMS owns and will operate the Hub, and will house it in the CMS secure cloud hosted at the Terremark Data Center. We are developing the Hub within CMS' environment, where it will remain. Once the Hub is operational, QSSI's role will be to support CMS in ensuring proper system performance, including maintenance and the development of enhancements as requested by CMS, as systems integrators routinely do for their customers on the customers' systems.

Status of the Data Services Hub

Our delivery milestones for Data Services Hub completion are being met on time. We expect CMS' Data Services Hub will be ready as planned by October 1st.

At this point:

- We have completed software coding for the Data Services Hub for all its required October 1st functions.
- We are continuing performance and integration testing.
- We have connected the Data Services Hub to databases at the key federal agencies that will be used to verify information.
- We have connected the Data Services Hub to the system that will transfer data to and from the health plan issuers.

As with any large scale project, we continue to review and test the Data Services Hub and will do so until launch. Additionally, CMS' independent tester has been testing the Data Services

Hub. The results to date have been routine and have required, in some instances, modifications and improvements to the system that are being successfully completed.

Data Security

Lastly, let me turn to data security, which we know is a longstanding priority for this Committee. Under the Federal Information Security and Management Act, CMS is required to follow the National Institute of Standards and Technology's security standards and guidelines for federal IT systems. Accordingly, the design and development of the Data Services Hub complies with these standards. As an IT solution provider to many federal agencies for nearly 15 years, QSSI is experienced at developing systems that comply with these standards. The Data Services Hub recently underwent an independent Security Risk Assessment by CMS' security assessment contractor, the Mitre Corporation. Our understanding from the preliminary report is that the Security Risk Assessment did not identify any issues that would prevent CMS from launching the Data Services Hub on October 1st.

As I mentioned previously, the Data Services Hub code is being developed, will launch, and will operate from within the CMS secure cloud hosted at the Terremark Data Center. Once in production, CMS will enforce additional security controls to protect the system, including controlling access and changes to the system. The Data Services Hub will be monitored continually by CMS and its information security contractors.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss QSSI and our work on the Data Services Hub.

I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.